

The Key to Happiness
By Sister Susilā

It's our tradition, before starting a Dharma talk, we pay our homage to the Buddha first.

Namo Tassa Bhagavato Arahato Sammā-Sambuddhassa
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All beings love happiness, seek happiness, and avoid suffering. Unfortunately, most beings think that happiness comes from the external, from the pleasure of sights, sounds, smells, tastes, touch, and mental objects. Our eyes are constantly seeking pleasant, agreeable sights. We spend our time watching movies, shopping. Men search for beautiful women; women beautify themselves to attract men. Our ears are constantly seeking sweet sounds—music and praises. Our nose wants good and fragrant smells. Our tongue constantly seeks delicious and sweet tastes—the taste of food, alcohol and drugs. We eat not to sustain the body, but to satiate our craving, overeating, and then later trying hard to lose weight. Many people crave for wine and liquor to the point of becoming alcoholics.

And our body constantly seeks a soft touch—a soft bed, clothing, and of course the touch of a loved one. Our mind indulges in all types of fantasies—planning and having expectations for the future, or recalling sweet memories of our past.

Due to this wrong perception—that happiness can be gained through the enjoyment of these six external objects—beings do not look inward to the source of true happiness.

Because we think that these six external objects can provide us true happiness and satisfaction, our actions follow from our thoughts accordingly. So with our body we seek all types of enjoyment through the six sense objects, forgetting the danger in that enjoyment, forgetting that the more we enjoy sensual pleasures the more we get addicted. The pleasant feeling felt from enjoying these objects gives rise to craving, and dependent on intense craving, clinging arises, clinging to these six external objects until we are unable to

let go of them. We become enslaved, performing different types of bodily and verbal actions to satiate the craving. These bodily, verbal, and mental actions are, according to the teachings of the Buddha, karma. And the law of karma says that when there is an action, there is a reaction. When you throw a ball onto a wall the ball rebounds.

These actions leave behind karmic energy, which is latent in the stream of our mind and body. When this karmic energy meets with favorable conditions, the results appear. The “fruit” arises. Then we have to pay for it. Let me give you an example: sometimes when we have sores on the limbs and they cause so much itchiness that we have to scratch them. But we also know the more we scratch them, the worse the wounds will be. Yet we cannot control our mind not to scratch them. Why do we continue scratching them? This is because when we are scratching those sores or wounds we find a certain measure of satisfaction, almost enjoyment, even though it makes the wounds worse. But we do not care about the effect, what matters more is the satisfaction and pleasurable feelings that the scratching stimulates. It is the same with all sensual pleasures. The moment you enjoy a sensual pleasure, of course it gives you satisfaction and pleasant feelings; but the wounds and the injury it causes cannot be underestimated. The Buddha compares sensual pleasures to a man taking a blazing grass torch and running against the wind. As he runs against the wind, the fire of the torch invariably blows backward against the man. Only by letting go of that blazing torch will he escape from being burnt.

Of course, there is no fault if we enjoy what we get lawfully. But it must have a limit. Let's say there is a bottle of honey. And an ant likes sweet honey. The moment the ant sees the honey, it goes inside the bottle to taste it. If the ant just takes one sip to satisfy its thirst, it is fine. However, most ants are unable to be contented with a single sip, they will continue to sip the honey and eventually they will die drowned in the honey. This is the danger inherent in sensual pleasures. Whenever craving for sensual pleasures increases, our body and mind become hot, agitated, and confused. We are tormented due to lust. There is no inner peace. It is important to understand that the enjoyment of the six external sense objects can never bring us lasting happiness.

What, then, are the ways to true happiness? Happiness has many types or levels, from gross to subtle.

Sharing what we have with others.

This is called dana, or charity, in the teaching of the Buddha. Whatever we have, be it money, knowledge, material things, sweet words, care and love, inspiration, we share with others who may need these things. When we see others using the things we have given to them, and we see they have benefited, that they become happy, we ourselves in turn become happy. I think most people practice this type of charity. This is one type of happiness.

By giving away some of our material things to others, we also find another type of happiness, which comes from:

Non-attachment to our own property.

We know that when life comes to an end, we have to leave everything behind—our big house, our car, money—we can't even bring one cent along. What then do we bring along when we pass away? Karma.

Most people die with fear and bewilderment, unable to depart from what they hold dear. Frequently practicing charity during one's life gives happiness and solace when reflecting on it during one's dying moment. This becomes the path leading to heaven. But if we accumulate the karma of stinginess rather than generosity, this paves the way to an unhappy rebirth. Since we know we have to die eventually and leave behind all our property, why not practice non-attachment to our property while we are still alive by sharing what we have with others? We practice now to make it a habitual karma as well as to provide us happiness here and now.

So we gain two types of happiness by practicing generosity— *happiness gained through sharing with others* and *happiness gained through non-attachment to our own property*. These are the so-called “gross” forms of happiness.

A more subtle type of happiness develops from there:

Not harming others.

People harm each other through physical and verbal actions. A person brings physical harm to others through beating and killing them; we even kill animals for our enjoyment. Verbally, we harm others through telling lies, speaking harshly, and spreading malicious gossips aimed at disrupting the harmony between two parties.

Not harming others is to be achieved by way of restraint. We restrain ourselves by following the five precepts, or five morality trainings:

1. Abstaining from killing
2. Abstaining from stealing: not taking what has not been freely given by others
3. Abstaining from sexual misconduct
4. Abstaining from telling lies
5. Abstaining from taking intoxicants

Taking drugs themselves is not necessarily unwholesome, but when a person takes alcohol and drugs without limit they lose clarity of mind—the mind becomes out of control. At that time a person can do anything and yet not be aware of any possible consequences. I have had devotees tell me, “When my husband is not taking any alcohol he is completely fine, he is a good person. But the moment he gets drunk, he would start to beat me up, scold me, and even beat my son and daughter. He becomes a madman.” So, we avoid taking intoxicants because once one loses clarity of mind, one is capable of performing many unwholesome deeds, which will harm both others and oneself.

One’s practice of self-restraint is based on two considerations: compassion for others and in understanding the law of karma.

Out of compassion for others, we abstain from killing. All beings love their lives. For example, let’s say one night as you are walking down a street and suddenly a robber appears with a knife, places it against your neck and threatens to cut your throat. How would you feel? Scared! You would feel fear. Fear of what? Fear of being harmed, of being killed. Why are we in fear of being killed? It is because we love our lives. We want to live. All sentient beings, including animals, also love their lives. They also do not want to be killed. Thus, Buddha said those who love themselves should not harm

others. So, out of compassion for others we abstain from unwholesome bodily conduct and unwholesome verbal conduct.

Understanding the law of karma is the second consideration. The law of karma says that good begets good, bad begets bad. When we harm others, this karma will return to us one day. When killing other beings, there is volition: *the wanting* to make their lives short. As a result, our lives will become short. In this world you can see some people live long, while others live only a short time. Some die at the age of 15 or 20, and many die while still in the mother's womb. Why is this so? Everything that happens depends on causes and conditions. Nothing happens without a cause.

Those who die very early are experiencing the results of their previous karma of killing. By understanding the law of karma we abstain from killing because we love ourselves, we want to live long in this world. In addition, by not harming others we ourselves are protected from and by the law of karma.

This protection is internal, not external. Buddha once described the difference: When a king and his ministers go out, they are protected by many bodyguards. But this protection is not real protection, it offers no guarantee. Instead, if we undertake self-restraint and do not harm others by bodily and verbal actions, we are protected internally by our wholesome karma, even without all those bodyguards to protect us. Internal protection is much more important than being protected externally by all the bodyguards. We are protected by our virtues. Being protected internally, wherever we go we become fearless. Fearlessness is very important, especially in the U.S.A. So many Americans have told me they have so much fear and worry—fear of their house being robbed or of being shot on the street. How do we overcome all these fears? If one keeps one's morality pure—never harming others by body, speech, and thought—automatically one will become joyful and fearless. Wherever I go, I am not worried what will happen to me because I trust my own good karma to protect me. Even if I were to be harmed, I would think wisely: it is just the result from my past unwholesome karma. I am paying my debt—that's all!

This fearlessness is a kind of happiness. It makes the mind light, courageous, and free. However if you have caused harm to others before, it is never too late to practice self-restraint now. Self-restraint gives internal protection and

enables one to live without fear. This means possessing confidence in life even while facing danger and death. Life becomes happier and lighter. This is the second kind of happiness: the happiness that comes from inner confidence based on not harming anyone through verbal and physical actions.

Now we come to the third type of happiness. This is the happiness that comes from not even harming others mentally. Physically and verbally we may not harm others, but sometimes mentally we may wish our enemies to be harmed. The moment this unskillful thought arises in our mind, the mind starts to lose its peace and happiness. How do we overcome this mental harm? We do this by cultivating loving-kindness, *metta meditation*. Metta is unconditional or universal love, a love without attachment—simply wanting others to be happy without any expectation.

In this meditation, we radiate thoughts of loving-kindness to others by sincerely wishing that they be well, happy, and peaceful, free from enmity and all other defilements. Thoughts of loving-kindness will produce many good vibrations or energy emanating from us that will have a positive effect on ourselves and others. Metta enables good health and good relationship with others, even with our enemies. However, radiating loving-kindness to our enemy is not an easy task. Therefore, we begin the practice by sending the metta to ourselves first. Again, this may be very difficult for some Americans, as many of them have told me that they have a lot of self-hatred. In that case, a skillful means may be to start with your pets. Most Americans like pets, some even more than human beings. One day I asked an American woman who has many pets, “Why do you like pets so much?” She answered, “When I get angry with them at least they never argue back.”

So start with your pet, and if it is successful, then you can switch to radiating metta to yourself:

“May I be well and happy... free from all mental suffering... free from all physical suffering.”

Keep repeating these messages until your mind is peaceful and becomes happy. Try to visualize the happy times you have had in your life. Keep on trying until you are successful.

Next we radiate metta to our respected teachers and friends whole heartedly until the joy and happiness arise in our heart:

“May you be well and happy... free from all mental suffering... free from all physical suffering.”

Then we proceed to a neutral person. To each person we repeat the above phrases until the mind becomes happy. Lastly, radiate metta to your enemy. But do not begin with the enemy you hate the most! Although mentally, you may say, “May my enemy be well and happy, may he be free from suffering”, if you are unable to forgive the hurt he or she had inflicted upon you, you may end your meditation wanting to give him or her something else – perhaps a hard blow! This is because we have not fully developed our minds yet.

First choose someone you only slightly dislike. Once you succeed in sending loving-kindness to him or her, change to another person you dislike a little more, until you reach the enemy you hate the most. And if you do not have any enemies in this world, then it is a blessing. You do not have to send your loving-kindness to an enemy. Although we may not hate anyone, somebody may not like us. So to those who do not like us, they should be considered as our enemies. Radiate metta to them. One day when you meet them, and they may start to smile at you...to greet you...even to send you a gift. At that time abundant happiness will arise in you. You will have softened the hatred. And don't think that this is a miracle. It does work very well. I would like to share with you my own experience.

Many years ago when I was in Malaysia, I was living with a fellow nun and a young lady. This young lady was behaving rudely toward us constantly without any apparent reason. And I was beginning to feel irritated by her behavior. One day I felt I should do something to improve the situation. Remembering the Buddha's words, “Anger cannot be overcome by anger,” I decided to radiate loving-kindness toward her.

Keeping her image clearly in mind, I repeatedly and sincerely sent her the following thoughts for half an hour: “May you be well and happy, free from all anger.” Afterward, I returned to my room. Before I stepped inside, the other nun told me that the young lady had prepared two gifts for us. Wow, what a surprise! It was truly beyond my expectations. She presented me with a gift by respectfully

bowing three times. And from that day forward she became much more cordial, and we lived in harmony until we departed. See the power of metta!

So this loving thought itself has great power. You must have faith in it. Try it out for yourself. If you have a lot of enemies you should try this even more. It will improve your personal relationships. If you try it on your boss, you may even get promoted! If you are the boss of a big company and you want to ensure productivity, try radiating metta to all your staff. You may try it especially for those employees who never seem to listen to you!

In this world, even if you are the Buddha, you cannot avoid people harassing you, abusing you. These are called the eight worldly conditions:

suffering and happiness; fame and disrepute; gain and loss; praise and blame.

Once we are skilled in metta meditation, we can directly radiate metta to those who hurt and abuse us, and thus fill ourselves with happiness. Through our mastery, we repay an angry man with patience and love, winning the battle that's hard to win. If we return an angry man's anger with our own anger, we are like someone trying to pick up a fire ball to hit another, but end up burning ourselves first. Instead, we should wish him to be well and happy, free from mental torture, free from anger. The person who utters abusive words and tries to hurt us is the one who loses. In order to utter abusive words to hurt somebody, one must generate anger first; without anger, one cannot utter harsh speech. So he is the victim of his own anger. Although apparently we are being abused, in actuality, he suffers the mental torment first. If we do not react with anger, he becomes a loser. He loses happiness now and here after, according to the law of karma. Understanding this, we can shift our attention from radiating metta to radiating compassion. Armed with compassion, our enemy may harm us physically or verbally, but never mentally. If none can harm us, this is a great blessing. Reflecting wisely in this way, we become even more fearless. Endowed with metta, wherever we go, *people love us, because we love them*. One does not feel lonely anymore. This is the third type of happiness.

Now we come to the most subtle type of happiness, the most difficult to achieve. The former three types are considered easy in comparison. The last and true happiness comes from:

Letting go of the attachment to the body and mind.

Everyone is attached to the body. Because of that, when the body feels sick or when any disease occurs, we feel depressed and become unhappy— that unhappiness and depression make our health even worse. Have you ever investigated why we feel unhappy when the body is sick? The cause lies in the deep attachment we have to the body. For an Arahant, an enlightened being, who no longer feels any attachment to the body, whatever happens to his body, he only feels the pain physically but not mentally. Ordinary people feel pain physically as well as mentally when the body is sick. This is because we are attached to and identified with the body as “mine” and “myself.” This attachment and wrong identification comes from not seeing the body as it really is. The “body” is just a concept. The four elements that make up the body are ultimate realities, and this is what we all must learn. This can be realized by practicing the *four elements meditation*.

The four elements are:

earth element, water element, fire element, and wind element.

Earth element is not referring to the earth itself; it is the characteristics it carries and bears that categorize it as earth element. Earth element has six characteristics: hardness, roughness, heaviness, softness, smoothness, and lightness. You can feel the earth element all over the body. For example, when you touch your bones or your head, you feel hardness. This hardness is earth element. Sometimes you feel softness, this is also earth element. Hardness and softness are relative.

Water element has the characteristic of flowing: our tears flow, as does saliva and blood. Water element also has the characteristic of cohesion, which makes the organs cohere together so that they do not scatter.

Fire element has the characteristic of heat and cold, which are also relative. When it is hot, it is the characteristic of heat. When it is less hot, it takes on the characteristic of cold. The heat that warms up the body, digestive heat, and the heat that causes our hair to turn grey are all called fire element. Those

who give in to anger fast - age fast - because of the excessive heat they produce.

What is the wind element? Our body can sit erect because of the supporting force within it—this force is the wind element. And we can move our limbs or move our hands, flex and stretch, because of wind element. So anything that moves, vibrates, or pushes is called wind element.

By investigating this body with wisdom from the top of the head down to the soles of the feet again and again, you will find only these four elements: earth, water, fire, and wind. And if you keep on discerning these four elements, concentration will develop until eventually you see the body emitting light. By discerning the four elements in the light, you will see the body break down into billions of very tiny particles. These particles are always arising and passing away, in a state of flux. You will see the whole body is bubbling, even breaking up. What is breaking up is not permanent—it is impermanent, transient, and fleeting. How can anything that is impermanent, changing, arising and passing away, and disintegrating give you happiness? It cannot. You also cannot control the process of arising and passing away. You cannot say, “Arising, please stop!” You cannot stop arising and ceasing. It follows its own nature. So if we cling, if we are attached to this body—which in the ultimate sense is only a heap that is arising and passing away—then we are attached to something that is dukkha, because what is impermanent is unsatisfactory, or dukkha. Understanding the true nature of this body allows us to let go of our attachment to it.

We have no choice but to let go. Since the body cannot be held on to, the mind naturally will let go of clinging to it. Once detachment from the body develops, when the body changes, it falls sick, grows old, the hair turns grey or white, we do not feel depressed. We do not feel mental anguish. Whatever happens to our body, we do not feel the pain. This is another type of happiness—the happiness that comes from non-attachment to the body.

Now we come to non-attachment to the mind. The mind can be divided into four aggregates:

1. Feeling Aggregate

2. Perception Aggregate
3. Formation Aggregate
4. Consciousness Aggregate

There are 3 types of feelings: pleasant, unpleasant, and neutral. We like pleasant feelings, dislike unpleasant feelings, and are ignorant of neutral feelings. We react in the same pattern throughout our lives. Feeling is just a mental factor, not a self. Where do these feelings come from? These feelings come from the six contacts. The six contacts are:

1. Eye contact: When the eye meets with a pleasant, agreeable visible form, pleasant feeling arises, and we start to cling to this feeling. We want it to continue, and to increase. Dependent on that pleasant feeling, craving arises.

However, if the visible object is not agreeable, unpleasant feeling arises, and we want to push it away. This activates the latent defilement of anger. If the visible object is neutral to the eyes, neutral feeling will arise.

2. Ear contact: When somebody praises us—the sound is very pleasant to the ears. Because of that pleasant feeling, even in our dreams we smile. When we meet with that person we would look for more praises. So, whenever there are pleasant feelings, the mind starts to crave, to grasp—this is the nature of the mind. This is why the Buddha states in the doctrine of Dependent Origination: “Dependent on feeling, craving arises.”
3. Nose contact: Whenever the nose comes into contact with a fragrant smell, a pleasant feeling arises. The pleasant feeling makes both the mind and body comfortable.
4. Tongue contact: Whenever some delicious food touches the tongue, a pleasant feeling will arise. For example, when a piece of chocolate cake touches the tongue sensitivity—Oh, what a pleasant feeling! Because of that feeling, one stretches out one's hand —wanting one more piece of the cake. Stretching out the hand to get one more piece is a sign of craving; grasping the cake and not wanting to let it go is clinging.

5. Bodily contact: Whenever the body touches some soft material or is caressed by a loved one, a pleasant feeling is stimulated.
6. Mental contact: Whenever the mind thinks of all the fantasies, daydreams and pleasant thoughts, pleasant feelings will arise out of the pleasant mind contact.

From the time we were born until now, we have experienced billions of pleasant feelings arising from these six contacts. Do any of the pleasant feelings you have experienced remain? Are they still here, or have they passed away? Not one of them has remained. This shows that all feelings are impermanent—we have just verified it for ourselves. And yet, whenever we encounter a pleasant feeling, we always hope it will stay forever. We always forget that it will also pass away, that it is transient. On the other hand, when we encounter an unpleasant feeling we always hope the unpleasant feeling will quickly go away. “Quickly go away—don’t last!” So we are not accepting things as they really are. We only want things to appear the way we want, and thus we are enhancing the identity view of a self! No matter how much we want our pleasant feelings to last forever and our unpleasant feelings to cease immediately, these feelings will never listen to us. Feelings arise and pass away according to causes and conditions. When the cause for its cessation is there, then the feeling passes away. The occurrence of feeling is beyond our control. This understanding that all feelings are not a self and are transient like bubbles helps us to let go of the attachment to pleasant feelings and the aversion to unpleasant feelings. Just look upon them as passing clouds in the sky. Then you will truly be happy.

Now let’s us consider the Perception Aggregate, and how one can gain happiness by not clinging to it. Let us first study what is the meaning of perception. Perception has the characteristic of knowing the quality of an object, so that the perceived object can be recognized again. For example, when you first saw a bird flying, your perception recognized the bird by its two wings flying in the sky. Perception made a mark or a note: “A bird has two wings” and kept it in your memory. The next time your eyes see a bird again; this perception immediately recognizes it as “this is a bird” by way of its two wings. So perception has two functions: 1. to perceive the specific characteristics of the object, and 2. to recognize it again.

As our wisdom is not fully developed through meditation, our five senses always perceive what is seen, heard, smelled, tasted and touched as permanent, happiness,

and a self. When we were born, we started crying for food. The moment our mother's milk came in contact with our tongue, very pleasant feelings arose. We started to make a mental note -- food gives pleasant feelings -- and our perception kept these experiences in our memory. Every time when we were fed, we felt good. When we were fed repeatedly, the same pleasant feelings repeatedly arose and they eventually got imprinted in the mind, giving rise to the perception that these pleasant feelings are permanent. Even now most of us unceasingly crave for food because we have learned over time to perceive that food gives us pleasant feelings and that these pleasant feelings are permanent. In addition, when our eyes first saw our beloved parents, when our ears heard their sweet voices, when our bodies felt the lovely touches of our mothers, we perceived, "Oh very good, great!" The happiness that came from what was repeatedly seen, heard, smelled, tasted and touched became perceived as permanent. On top of this, we also wrongly perceived that there was a self -- a permanent self -- that perceived these experiences. This is called *sañña vipallasa*—perverted perception—perception that is contrary to the truth. Once perceived wrongly, this perception becomes very deeply rooted in our mental stream. And this phenomenon can be duly verified.

This habitual perception based on a distorted view is responsible for our frustrations when things turn out to be different from what we have perceived. The vicissitudes of life have taught us that many happenings occurring in life are beyond our control; they happen as a result of causes and conditions. If we have not delusively perceived everything as permanent and happy, would we have felt suffering when things change? To perceive things as they really are is in accordance with the truth. It makes the mind unshakable under all circumstances. What does it mean: *things as they really are*? All formations, everything in this world, are subject to change, alteration, and destruction. Everything is in a constant flux, characterized by its repeated arising and passing away and because of this we felt oppressed. And this oppression felt is suffering, or dukkha. Dukkha is inherent in all changing things. Therefore, by correcting our perverted perception that everything lasts, contains happiness and is identified as a 'self' - is the key to happiness. How do we correct this perverted perception? It is done by constantly contemplating impermanence until it successfully changes our perverted perception.

The next aggregate is the Formation Aggregate. A formation is the construction of a condition. The function of formations is to accumulate karma. Its characteristic is in forming, in adding all mental factors together. Formation aggregate includes lust, anger, jealousy, avarice, fear, remorse, worry, faith, joy, compassion, mindfulness, wisdom, concentration, and so on. They are

merely mental states arising due to causes, performing their functions, then immediately passing away.

For example, at the present moment you are listening to my talk joyfully, as listening to the Dharma is delightful. The mental factor of joy at this moment is performing its function of permeating you with lightness of the body and mind. It is just the work of the mental factor of joy. This joy should not be regarded as “I” or as “myself”. If I now change my tone and words to speak to you harshly, to scold you without any reason, the causes for the arising of joy will come to cessation. In their place, anger that is dormant in the mental stream may come up to the surface instead because the conditions for its arising are ready. Thus, when the conditions for joy or anger to arise come into being, then the joy or anger, as the case may be, will simply arise. All mental formations are governed by causality. *To see things in accordance with causality without any controlling entity is the key to happiness.*

The last aggregate is the Consciousness Aggregate. It has the single characteristic of awareness of an object. There are six classes of consciousness:

- 1) Eye-consciousness seeing a form
- 2) Ear-consciousness hearing a sound
- 3) Nose-consciousness smelling a smell
- 4) Tongue-consciousness tasting a taste
- 5) Body-consciousness sensing a tangible object
- 6) Mind-consciousness being aware of a mental object

In the blink of an eye, millions of consciousnesses arise and vanish at tremendous speed. Owing to this incredibly rapid succession, the rise and fall of consciousness is hardly distinguishable and appear to be continuous. They appear to be continuous, a perpetual awareness rather than what is really happening: discrete, rapidly succeeding mind moments operating in a fixed, ordered process, thus giving rise to awareness.

A simile may make this clearer. When we are watching television and at the same time eating chips and smelling their fragrance, it seems as if seeing, tasting, smelling, and listening are all happening simultaneously. In addition, we wrongly think it is “I” who sees, tastes, smells, and hears. Thus, the Buddha likens consciousness to a magician, making what is unreal seem real to deceive us.

These five aggregates make up the “I”, and craving and attachment arise dependent upon them. And when there is attachment, there is suffering.

How can we practice to free ourselves from attachment to this body and mind, from the five aggregates? *We must practice mindfulness and wisdom.*

Mindfulness comes face to face with the object of focus and does not forget it. Mindfulness is free from judgment, bias, prejudice, and preference. Instead, mindfulness simply observes, recognizes, allows, and accepts any phenomena arising in the present moment for what they really are, neither embellishing them nor detracting from them.

There are two factors in mindfulness: recognition and acceptance.

For example, when anger has arisen in your mind, you may recognize it as, “There is anger in my mind.” Accept it. Accept the anger as it is. Do not try to push away what is unpleasant and cling on to what is pleasant. Reacting in such a way does not free us from suffering. Accepting the anger as it really is allows the wisdom to see the impermanence of anger.

Wisdom means to see things as they really are, in accordance with the truth, as impermanent, suffering, and not a self.

Wisdom requires several actions. First, not to self-identify: when any phenomenon arises from the mind and body, for example, an unpleasant bodily feeling, we must not self-identify with this unpleasant feeling. We do this by mentally noting, “This unpleasant feeling is not “I”, not “mine”, and not “myself.”

If one does not dis-identify with the feeling, what will happen? One's mind will immediately identify feeling as “I”: in that - “I am feeling bad.” An unpleasant feeling, in and of itself, is unbearable, which gives rise to pain. The self-identification with the unpleasant feeling as “I” only intensifies the pain, and as a result one suffers even more. This is suffering due to pain—*dukkha-dukkha*.

On the other hand, if you self-identify with pleasant feelings as “I,” you also suffer, but this time you suffer from craving! Both the mind and body are tormented by

craving. When the pleasant feeling disappears, as it must, you suffer again from the change and the loss of the pleasant feeling. This is suffering due to change—*viparinam-dukkha*. So to free yourself from different types of sufferings, you do not self-identify with whatever phenomenon that has arisen.

The next step in developing wisdom is:

to investigate.

If a feeling is not “I”, not “mine,” and not “myself”, what then is this feeling?

You investigate the characteristic and function of the feeling: its characteristic is to be felt and its function is to experience the desirable and undesirable aspects of the object. For example, the chocolate cake has a desirable aspect—its deliciousness. When the chocolate cake touches your tongue, a pleasant feeling arises experiencing the good taste of that cake. This is pleasant feeling’s function. It is not “I feel the pleasant taste”; it is the mental state of the feeling itself experiencing the delicious taste of the chocolate. In this way, one can further investigate cause and effect.

Investigation of cause and effect is very important in the teaching of the Buddha. It is the same as wisdom. When you investigate - where does this pleasant or unpleasant feeling come from? - you will find the answer: feeling arises from the six contacts—eye contact, ear contact, nose contact, tongue contact, body contact, and mind contact.

When the chocolate cake contacts/impinges the tongue sensitivity, pleasant feelings arise. Before the chocolate cake touches the tongue, no pleasant feelings arise. Only at the moment of contact do pleasant feelings arise. You then understand: “Oh, feeling is just an effect of the cause and, of the contact.” Similarly, when the eyes meet with someone you love, a pleasant feeling arises. On the other hand, if the eyes see someone you dislike or hate, an unpleasant feeling rises. After investigating in this way again and again, you will come to realize that each different feeling arises dependent on the type of contact, and you know with certainty for yourself that: “This feeling is an effect of a cause (contact). It’s merely the phenomenon of cause and effect.”

This is why feeling is not defined as “I”, “mine” or “myself”. If feeling were “I”, then whenever that feeling perishes, the “I” would have also perished. However, through your own experiences, though many different types of feelings have passed away, the so called “I” still remains there. Thus it does not seem fit to assume that the feeling were “I”. The non-self nature of the phenomenon is revealed through the investigation of cause and effect. As the cause—contact—keeps changing, then the effect—feeling—keeps changing as well. Whatever keeps changing is impermanent.

This brings us to the next step in the process of developing wisdom is in:

contemplating impermanence.

Mentally, you should mark whatever phenomenon that arises as impermanent, noting: “Impermanent...impermanent...impermanent.”

We note impermanence for four reasons:

1. To undo our perverted perception of permanence that blocks us from seeing things as they really are.
2. To synchronize or harmonize the mind with the way things are. Everything in the universe is continually changing. By synchronizing our mind with it, this universal truth of change will manifest itself very fast.
3. To sever the craving. If you think that the six sense objects, six sense bases, six contacts, six feelings, or six applications of mind are happiness and permanent, then you are nurturing craving. By nurturing craving, you cannot be free from suffering.
4. To teach the mind to let go. Since we cannot hold on to any phenomenon, the wisest way to deal with it is to let go of our attachment to it. When consciousness does not cling to pleasant feeling, for instance, then when this pleasant feeling passes away, you will not feel pain or stress because you already know it is impermanent. You are able to remain equanimous. *This equanimity is a great type of happiness.*

If you can practice in this way, you will find your happiness *increase* gradually, day by day. Because your knowing mind is now in accord with the truth of anicca,

you are able to let go of the clinging to the five aggregates. Buddha said: “*The five aggregates of clinging are the Noble Truth of Suffering.*” This truth must be thoroughly understood. The five aggregates are the same as the mind and body, and we cling to them in two ways, by way of *wrong view and craving*. With wrong view we identify with these five aggregates as “I” and as “myself”, giving rise to strong craving, and to clinging. As Buddha said, the cause for our suffering, or the Noble Truth of the Origin of Suffering, is craving. So in order to free ourselves from suffering we have to let go of the cause, which is craving.

As you become familiar with contemplating each experience as “impermanent...impermanent”, you will actually see it quickly arising and passing away. Then knowledge will arise in you that what is constantly changing cannot bring happiness, but is only dukkha, or dissatisfaction. Whatever is anicca (impermanent) or dukkha (suffering), should not be regarded as atta (self), as no controlling entity can be found. It is anatta, not a self.

When your concentration, mindfulness, and wisdom become more mature, then no matter what arises in your mind and body, the wisdom sees it only as the arising of suffering, and whatever ceases is just the cessation of suffering. Buddha said:

“All formations are transient. Having arisen, they cease. Their cessation is bliss.”

Having repeatedly seen anicca, dukkha, and anatta, the mind becomes disenchanted toward the five aggregates. Being disenchanted, one feels dispassionate and is willing to let go of craving. When the mind no longer clings to anything whatsoever, this is called *Freedom of the Heart*, liberation from moment to moment. *This liberation is the true happiness that we can experience in our daily life.*

In brief, whatever arises in this mind and body—pain, happiness, sorrow, like and dislike—is, in fact, giving us a chance to experience the truth. Apply mindfulness and wisdom to free oneself from all types of entanglement. This is the true happiness.

Dharma shared by Sayalay Susilā in Ohio, US, 2011